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future time, a comparison of the fauna of this region with that of the life of similar reefs in Samoa or Tahiti would be highly instructive.

Surely there can be no place on our Atlantic coast which would give handsomer returns for such an outlay. The only objection is the relative inaccessibility of the Tortugas.

DAVID S. JORDAN.

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#### SHORTER ARTICLES.

##### SOME LITTLE-KNOWN BASKET MATERIALS.

BASKET collectors have been much puzzled over the identity of two materials which are extensively used by some of the California tribes. One of these forms the body surface of most of the coiled baskets made by the Indians inhabiting the lower slopes of the Sierra from Fresno River south to the Kern. These baskets are celebrated for excellence of workmanship, beauty of form, elegance of design and richness of material. The material differs in tone and texture from that used by the tribes north and south of the region indicated. When fresh its color is brownish-buff; with age it becomes darker and richer. By careful selection a handsome dappled effect is produced. The Indians told me it was the root of a marsh plant which they traveled long distances to procure. After some difficulty I succeeded in obtaining specimens, which were identified for me by Miss Alice Eastwood, botanist of the California Academy of Sciences, as *Cladium mariscus*. The coil, around which the split *Cladium* root is wound, consists of a bundle of stems of a yellow grass, *Epicampes rigens*. The black in the design is the beautiful root of the 'bracken' or 'brake fern,' *Pteridium aquilinum*. The red is usually split branches of the redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*, with the bark on, gathered after the fall rains when the bark is red. The tribes making the *Cladium* baskets are the Nims, Chukchancys, Cocahebas, Wuksaches, Wiktchumnes, Tulares and perhaps one or two others. Besides these, the root is sometimes used by certain squaws of the Mewah tribe living north of the Fresno, and by the Pakanepull and Newooah tribes

living south of the Kern; but among these its use is exceptional.

Another material which has proved a stumbling block to collectors is the red of the design in the handsome baskets made by the Kern Valley, Neewooah, and Panamint Shoshone Indians. This material is often called 'cactus root,' but in my recent field work in the region where it is used I discovered that it is the unpeeled root of the tree yucca (*Yucca arborescens*). The tree yucca grows in the higher parts of the Mohave Desert, pushes over Walker Pass, and reaches down into the upper part of the valley of South Fork of Kern. The so-called Tejon Indians obtain it in Antelope Valley at the extreme west end of the Mohave Desert. The yucca root varies considerably in depth of color, so that by careful selection some of the Indian women produce beautiful shaded effects and definite pattern contrasts.

Some of the Panamint Shoshones inhabiting the desolate desert region between Owens Lake and Death Valley use, either in combination with the yucca root or independently, the bright red shafts of the wing and tail feathers of a woodpecker—the red-shafted flicker. These same Indians use two widely different materials for their black designs—the split seed pods of the devil's horn, *Martynia*, and the root of a marsh bulrush, *Scirpus*. The *Martynia* is a relatively coarse material and when properly selected yields a dead black. The *Scirpus* root is a fine delicate material which, by burying in wet ashes, is made to assume several shades or tones, from blackish-brown to purplish-black, or even lustrous black.

In parts of the Colorado Desert in southeastern California the Coahuila Indians use split strands from the leaf of the desert palm (*Neowashingtonia filamentosa*) as a surface material for their coiled baskets. The design is usually black or orange-brown and is a rush (*Juncus*).

C. HART MERRIAM.

#### A NOTE ON PHRYNOSOMA.

IN 'The Cambridge Natural History,' Vol. VIII., on 'Amphibia and Reptiles,' by Hans Gadow (London, 1901), on p. 533, regarding